

A PROPOSAL TO THE COMMISSION ON AGING PUBLIC POLICY
COMMITTEE:

**TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF THE CURRENT PUBLIC POLICY TO
PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO RESIDENTS OF MONTGOMERY
COUNTY TO INCLUDE A SPECIFIC CATEGORY OF “PURPOSE BUILT
SENIOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING” AS A PART OF PUBLIC POLICY AND
PROMOTED THROUGH LAND USE POLICY DECISIONS.**

Montgomery County already supports affordable housing through its legislation and zoning ordinance amendments that provide for the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. The County also supports affordable housing through financial housing initiatives administered by the Department of Community Development. Additionally, the county supports affordable housing for low-income residents through programs administered by the Housing Opportunities Commission. The County does not have an articulated policy and recognition of the unique needs of seniors requiring affordable housing as being differentiated and unique from affordable housing built for those under the age of 55.

The County is going through a process of re-evaluating its land use policies particularly in the areas near and surrounding metro stations. For an example, the County has approved a major re-zoning in the White Flint Master Plan. Part of that re-zoning required a minimum of 9,000 units of affordable housing.

I believe to adequately serve low and moderate income seniors, that a part of those 9,000 units should be set aside for affordable purpose built senior housing.

Purpose built senior housing would meet several of the objectives outlined in the Empowerment Zone Legislation and the Maryland Communities of a Lifetime Act. In the act it states that Maryland Communities for a Lifetime plans must address among other things, “. . . adoption of local ordinances (including zoning and housing code provisions) that expands the pool of available housing options and also promotes accessibility and visitability.” The Act also recommends the “expansion of public health and aging services to support wellness and prevention programs. In the CoA Summer Study on Communities for a Lifetime, one of the recommendations in the legislation is to “Seek to expand affordable housing options for older adults, both as homeowners and renters” Purpose built affordable senior housing will expand appropriate housing options for low and moderate income seniors.

At the moment, there is no stated policy, legislation, or program that supports affordable purpose built affordable senior housing. There is no policy or program that recognizes the unique and specialized housing needs for seniors. I think

that the Commission on Aging can play a role in educating legislators and land use policy makers about the unique needs of seniors, how appropriate housing options can enhance their lifestyles, keep them engaged in life, lower costs of having only institutionalized housing options such as assisted living available

BACKGROUND:

1. There are currently 114,331 seniors 65+ in Montgomery County, it is projected that by 2015 there will be 131,620 and in 2020 there will be 152,648.
2. Over age 85, women outnumber men 2 to 1
3. 31.4% of older women live alone
4. Apartment living increases with age, 43% of those 75 – 84 live in apartments
5. Renters have lower income than owners, senior owner average income is \$61,612, renter average income \$29,490
6. 72% of renters between 75 -84 pay over 30% of their income for housing
7. Currently the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) has a minimum of a 4-year wait for low income seniors to get a unit in their senior housing program.
8. It has been documented that low and moderate income seniors are likely to move if appropriate housing is available to them. Many of them can't afford to maintain their current living conditions
9. There are currently approximately 2,000 subsidized independent senior housing units without meals in Montgomery County

PURPOSE BUILT AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING FEATURES:

1. Design features such as Universal Design, to enhance safety and comfort in the home
2. Security
3. Trained staff to coordinate County Senior Services for those living in the community that may need such services
4. Staff to connect residents to civic engagement or volunteer opportunities
5. Staff to advocate for needs of residents (staffing requirements can be embodied in one person)
6. Gathering places for socialization, civic engagement, volunteerism
7. Access to services, i.e. transportation, shopping, doctors